

# NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by  
The Monterey History and Art Association

Vol. XVII, Number 1

March, 1972

## RANCHO EL SUR

Captain John B. R. Cooper, English born, American by naturalization, came to California in 1823 as master of the ship Rover from Boston. He sold the ship to the Mexican authorities but continued to command her, sailing to China, the Sandwich Islands, and other ports. He established a home at Monterey, married Encarnacion Vallejo, a daughter of Ignacio Vallejo the sergeant of the old Spanish Presidio days. Cooper was a trader, building an adobe on Polk street, and had many business ventures with other early residents of Monterey.

Cooper became a colorful character of California. Light complexioned, blue eyed, and sandy haired, he was 5'5" tall. He was called Don Juan el Manco because of his left arm. It was badly scarred and the muscles contracted as the result of a youthful personal encounter. As he grew older he became a thick, stout man, nervous and abrupt in his movements, and developed a peculiar habit of scratching or even biting the withered hand when laboring under excitement. He always wore the same style outfit — a slouched white hat, blue short jacket, gray satinet pants and cowhide shoes — regardless of the season or the formality of the occasion. His contemporaries commented on his integrity, his good nature, and his honest countenance. He had Kanakas for his crew, and they loved him.

Cooper may have sailed the Pacific and loved the sea, but he also had a strong love of the land as evidenced by his care of the large land grants he obtained before 1850. His problem was to manage these properties while he was often away for several months. He had to rely on others to act for him, or he leased out parts of the land on shares or a rental basis, giving the renter sufficient incentive to develop it.

Cooper obtained almost 7,000 acres of land along the lower part of the Salinas river by purchasing it in 1829 from the original grantee. This was and is fine land producing excellent crops. He placed some cattle on the land, but as the American farmers came into California in the 1850s he leased the land to individuals in plots ranging from 50 acres to several hundred. In 1869 in his personal account book he listed 36 lots on Salinas, totaling 6,422 acres, which were rentals. Among the renters were Michael O'Neil, E. J. Preston, J. H. Ashle, B. O. Walker, John W. Mellus, Edward Logwood, A. Copeland, Benjamin H. Drum, James McDonald, Reubin Jefferey, F. D. Hall, etc. He also built a house for himself on the land where he and the family could stay. This was about a mile from what became Cooper's Switch on the railroad line leading to Salinas.

The second large rancho acquired in Monterey County by Cooper was a tract of land along the coast some miles south of Monterey, which today we call the Sur area. This grant was originally made by the Governor of California in 1834 to Juan Bautista Alvarado. Alvarado was then twenty-five years old, of a prominent family, and destined to become Governor of California himself in a few years.

El Sur rancho comprised almost 9,000 acres. Cooper Point on the coast west of the area of Pfeiffer Park is the southern most point of the grant, and the northern boundary reached to the mouth of the Little Sur river. The new park named for Andrew Molera and recently opened to visitors lies on a part of the grant. The Naval Facility, and the lighthouse are also part of the grant.

Cooper's wife was an aunt of Juan Bautista Alvarado and so the families were close. On December 9, 1940 Cooper and Alvarado signed an agreement whereby Cooper gave to Alvarado his lands on the Salinas, and Alvarado gave to Cooper the Sur lands. But Cooper obtained back the Salinas lands three years later by purchasing from Alvarado for \$1,000 in coin. Thus by December of 1843 Cooper had almost 16,000 acres of rancho lands in present day Monterey County.

We believe he already was developing the Sur land before the deed of December 1843, as we found that in June of 1843 Cooper signed a contract with Job Dye renting the land to Dye for the term of five years. Also in the memoirs that Job Dye himself wrote in latter years it is stated that as early as 1833 Dye agreed to take mules down to the Sur rancho for Cooper.

Dye evidently did not complete his rental agreement of 1843 as he went to the gold fields during the gold rush. Job F. Dye was a well known early resident of California. Born in Hardin County, Kentucky, he came to California originally as part of the trapping party of Ewing Young. He said that his purpose was to hunt and kill sea otters. He left Ewing, purchased a boat in Santa Barbara and hunted along the coast and near the islands of San Miguel and Santa Rosa. He became embroiled in troubles with the Mexican authorities and just when that was cleared and he started hunting for the Father at San Luis Obispo his rifle became out of order, so he came to Monterey to have it repaired. He boarded with George Kinlock for some months and, according to his memoirs, the following fall he entered into a contract with Captain Cooper to convey 217 brood mares to his ranch on the coast "El Sur". Dye wrote "It was designed to raise mules, in the main, and I commenced business in October 1833, and continued it until the fall of 1835, when, finding it unprofitable, I abandoned the stock raising business and opened a distillery on the Zayante, near Santa Cruz."

The dates of 1833 to 1835 are actually before the original grant of the rancho to Alvarado in December of 1840. It is possible that the rancho was being stocked before the petition for grant — as could occur — or it is possible that Dye was confused in his dates as he wrote his memoirs in later years. But we do have recorded the rental agreement involving stock between Cooper and Dye in December 1843.

The problems of transportation down the long coastal headlands must have been staggering. To drive cattle, horses, and mules over that rugged terrain demanded the finest of vaqueros. Every item needed for food had to be safely packed and properly loaded. We can only wonder how many animals were lost on some canyon trail?

Cooper found another renter for the Sur when in August of 1851 he signed an agreement with Robert H. Fisher, Jose Maria Smith, and Manuel Smith for the term of three years. Robert H. Fisher seems to have dropped out early, and Manuel Smith sold his interest in the agreement before the end of three years, but Jose Maria Smith remained through the term, and also into the 1860s.



The agreement signed in 1851 sets forth the conditions whereby the rancho was to be developed and be of profit hopefully to both Cooper and Smith. Some of the conditions were:

1. The renters were to assist at all times in taking care of in corralling all the cattle, horses, or other animals belonging to Cooper. They were allowed to use for milking purposes all the cows they could tame, and Cooper would pay them three dollars for every wild cow they tamed for milking. That is, for every cow tamed over and above the 92 tame cows that were already on the farm.

2. Smith and associates were to be allowed for their consumption and that of their family three young bulls for every two months.

3. They were to build on the place to be chosen by Cooper a good and substantial adobe house. This house was to contain two rooms, sixteen feet square each, with a passage way between eight feet in width. The story was to be nine feet high, the walls to be twelve feet high from stone foundation, the floor, and the under part of the loft floor to be planed, the house to be well finished with doors and windows and covered with shingles. They were to supply the labor, and the materials, and Cooper would furnish the iron and glass. When the work was completed Cooper would pay them six hundred dollars.

4. The renters were to enclose at least ten acres with a good and substantial redwood post and rail fence — to be used by them for cultivation and for an orchard which would be planted at the cost of Cooper. They would take care, preserve, and have the use of this ten acres during the rental term, and at the end of the term Cooper would pay them at the rate of 74¢ for each eight feet of fencing.

5. Cooper reserved for himself the privilege of occupying, cultivating and using any part of the farm, not interfering with any part they were using, and Cooper could also kill cattle from the stock already on the farm for the consumption of his family.

6. Smith et al would receive from Cooper at the end of the term all the increase over and above 1150 head. It was noted that there were 600 head of stock on the ranch when they started. The increase at the end of three years, over and above 1150 head would become the property of Smith and associates — this increase to be taken in calves — one-half bull and the other half cow calves.

We do not have records of the daily affairs of the ranch during the 1851 to 1855 period, but beginning with 1855 we can trace the development of the cattle ranch through the entries found in an old personal account book kept by Captain John B. R. Cooper, and presented to the Monterey History and Art Association by Mrs. John B. R. Cooper, widow of Captain Cooper's grandson.

This old book has a wide variety of entries. In it were kept notes that he wanted to remember, such as the address of David Jacks while Jacks made a trip to his former home — Crieff, Perthshire, Scotland. There is also the list of parents who were probably petitioning Mother Superior Maria Cornelia, sister of Notre Dame, to establish a school — Salvador Osio, Francisco Soberanes, James Finch, Francisco Pinto, John Wallace, Benito Diaz, Esteban de la Torre, Daniel McDougall, John Clenford, etc. There is the note that Juan Antonio Vallejo (a brother of Mrs. Cooper) was killed by a horse on Tuesday, May 26, 1857.

To the historian the main interest of this old account book is in the pages listing the accounts of Rancho del Sud, House acct, Salinas Ranch, and the Molino Ranch (property owned in Sonoma County).

The first entry in this book concerning the "Sud Rancho" as the pages are headed is as follows "1855 J. M. Smiths acct. of cattle taken from the Sud ranch". This is followed by a total of 330 head, including 8 delivered to Pancho Estrada, 126 to John H. Cooper (the son of Captain Cooper), 126 to Captain John B. R. Cooper, 17 killed for jerky, 18 killed for use of the rancho, some exchanged for a bull, etc.

The same year of 1855 marks the increase of the herd. Of the stock that was the personal property of Cooper there was an increase of 106 bull calves and 137 cow calves. 16 were sent to his Molino ranch, some were ironed (branded) as an increase, and some 41 bull calves and 72 cow calves were listed as tamed.

At the same time Jose Maria Smith had added to his herd 53 bull calves and 62 cow calves.

The tools on the rancho were increasing in number. In September of 1855 Cooper made a list headed "Articles on the Rancho at this date". This includes a whip saw, cross cut saw, auger, large iron pots, frow for splitting shingles, and items that were probably for the house that Cooper stayed in while visiting the ranch — 11 plates, cups and saucers, pitcher, tin candle stick, tin coffee pot, tin cup, pint measure, looking glass, iron spits, buckets. etc.

The main problem facing the men operating the ranch, and Cooper himself when overseeing the work, was that of getting there. Being used to the sea Captain Cooper bought his own boat, and probably landed his supplies at the mouth of the Sur river where the next generation had a wharf.

Oct. 16, 1855 marks the entry of the cost of \$89.50 for a boat, cartage and freight down from San Francisco; also entries for a boat anchor, manila rope, 6 fathoms of chain, 2 lbs. of nails, 5 gallons of oil and one keg of white lead, tow fish lines — all for the boat. And in November he paid the blacksmith \$12.75 for work on the boat and another bill for repairing and fitting her, as well as a bill of \$15.00 for plank and board. Then he paid the men for taking down the boat \$21.50 and finally there is an entry "whole cost of the boat \$272.71, and for taking her down \$21.50".

The next year of 1856 marked the cost of \$115.00 for "a boat for the Sud landed here" and he had Jeremy the blacksmith make rowlocks for her. Whether this was a second boat to be used for "the Sud" or a replacement when the first was lost we do not know, but we can see that the investment in these two boats within twelve months was a large expense for the rancho. There was the problem of coastal storms — a new mast was purchased in July of 1857, and at the same time a piece of plank for the keel, and then more repairing, painting etc. "for boat". In September of 1858 there is an entry "boat expenses this Summer \$227.00".

The boat expenses entered end after January of 1859, but the entries of the rancho continue in this account book to 1871. We do not know if this indicates he gave up trying to keep a boat, or possibly a trail had been developed along the coast that was more reliable than landings in a small boat on an often fog bound shore. We do know that Cooper continued to have small boats because in the House account of 1864 he entered a charge of \$20 paid to Captain Mariano (a local Whaler) for fixing and rigging the small boat. And in August 1857 he entered in the Sur account the charge of \$40 for a "canoa".

During the late 1850s we find that cheese was being produced on the Sur. The taming of the cows, the development of a dairy herd was paying off. In February a record was made that 3 cheese weighing 20 lbs. were kept, and six were delivered to Diaz. This must have been Manuel Diaz, who had a store in Monterey.

The names of men employed on the ranch was enlarged. Chrisostomo Castro "went to the Sud with his family from Monterey and engaged for one year at \$20 per month". Others on the ranch included David Castro, Sisto Manjares, Narcisso, and at least two Indians named Salvadore and Nickolas. Manuel Boronda went to work steady on November 28, 1860 at \$20 per month.



The men on the ranch could charge items at the stores in Monterey when they came to town, and these charges were paid by Cooper and deducted from the men's pay when he "settled up". For example when Mateo went to work as "Mateo del Sud" or "Matthew", he evidently took with him his wife as he charged a pair of women's shoes, six yards of cotton, and soap, as well as a rifle, a mould, flour, sugar, a padlock and some bread. When Andress came to Monterey he had need of a flannel shirt and a pair of boots, as well as powder and lead.

More land was probably being brought under cultivation as we find the entry of plows being purchased. One from Escolle cost \$14.50. And in February of 1859 Cooper paid the storekeeper Boston \$6.72 for Barley. Could this have been seed for planting?

The same year of 1859 marked an important step in the ownership of the ranch. On January 20 a bill was paid "for surveying Sud rancho \$340.00", and another bill of \$30.00 was paid for "boat hire for the surveyors". Cooper, along with all other rancho owners had to present his claim with proof of ownership to the Commission appointed by the U.S. Government. This surveying cost was probably to make a complete map of the rancho for presentation to the Commission. According to a report of the State Surveyor-General made in 1880, the Rancho El Sur was patented to J. B. R. Cooper May 18, 1866. The final confirmation gave him 8,949.06 acres.

Any cattle ranch in an undeveloped country is subject to the raids of predators. The Sur ranch lay facing the sea with the tree covered hills almost enclosing its pasture area. The now extinct grizzly bear roamed the hills and was a threat to stock and man. Cooper paid well for a bear killed. At a time when a Mayordomo was receiving \$20 a month Cooper paid to one Sandoval in July of 1857 the sum of \$24 for killing a bear. Sandoval also worked on the rancho that year helping with the Matanza (round up). A famous killer of bears according to the memoirs of several pioneers was Jacobo Escobar. The Escobar brothers also were known as being ever ready to capture a bear alive and bring it to Monterey for a bull and bear fight. In July of 1867 Jacobo Escobar was on the Sur and we find that Cooper charged him \$90 for two horses, and paid him \$70 for killing three bears.

The old account book gives us glimpses of the annual cattle drive of the cattle to be sold. For example at the end of November and the first of December in 1856 Jose Maria Smith was paid \$30 for work taking charge of cattle to San Francisco, and on his return Cooper "settled up with Jose M. Smith respecting the provisions he were to have".

Aside from the regular hands, others were hired for the drive. Antonio was paid a total of \$40, including \$1.00 in cash given him in San Francisco. George Smith was also on the trip, being paid different rates, evidently according to the work. His first day earned him 75¢, ten days were paid at the rate of \$2.00 per day, and eight days work paid him \$12.00. Jose M. Armenta worked 7 days at \$2.00 per day, and 4 days brought him \$6.00.

John B. R. Cooper had two sons whom he groomed to take over his property. John B. H. Cooper, the oldest, was born in 1830. He was the one who helped develop the Salinas lands, and he it was who was named in Captain Cooper's will as one of the executors.

The second son was William Rogers, called Rogerio in the family account book. Born in 1838, Rogers was sent east to school, and was partly under the guardianship of Cooper's half brother, Thomas O. Larkin, who had moved east in order that his own sons would have a good education. Larkin came back to California on a business trip in 1852 and reported to Encarnacion Vallejo de Cooper by letter from San Francisco about Rogers who was then in school about twelve miles from New York, and often visited the Larkins; "My wife had Oliver, Rogero and Andronico at our house a week. They were a rude and

noisy set when all together. . Your son is learning, looks and dresses well, is healthy, stout and very contented."

Rogerio probably returned to California near the end of 1854. On January of 1857, when he was nineteen years old Rogerio was presented with a "pistol six shooter" costing \$30. This charge is to the House account in the old book, but the next reference to Rogerio is found in the "Sud" account. That may mark the year the young man was sent down to the coast ranch to learn the ways of a cattle man. In the fall there was a charge for materials for trousers for Rogerio and in the winter, Feb. 14, 1858 there was a blanket purchased from Boston's store for Rogerio.

That first winter on the coast may have been one of cold, rain, and fog or perhaps some sickness struck the men. Rogerio appears back in the house account in Monterey and the entries reveal the story.

|                |   |          |
|----------------|---|----------|
| March 31, 1858 | pd Dr. McKee doctoring the Indian               | \$ 50.00 |
|                | pd Dr. Calihan for doctoring the Indian         | 12.00    |
|                | pd Dr. McKee for doctoring Rogerio              | 22.50    |
|                | pd Maximo Toboas for Rogerio                    | 68.76    |
| April 3        | A. Taylor bill for medicine                     | 11.50    |
|                | (Alexander Taylor was the druggist of Monterey) |          |
| April 11       | pd Trowsers to the tailor for Rogerio           | 10.00    |
|                | pd Doctor Canfields bill                        | 130.00   |

By April 11th Rogerio must have been better after a long and surely severe illness. Every available doctor had been called in!

Rogerio may have gone on a short trip with the rest of the family in July to San Jose, because the House account is charged with \$73.25 expenses paid by the older son "to San Jose with the family from Monterey".

It is not until the next year, in July of 1859, that we find Rogerio at the Sur again. One pair of spurs were purchased from the "herera" for \$5.00. In August a new saddle was obtained from Banales for Rogerio, and the next January a colts revolver costing \$27.50 was paid for. The revolver was sent to the rancho in March along with 2 lbs. of tea, 1 arroba of sugar, and some soap and 1 bag of flour from John. We wonder if the father and older brother were sending special gifts to Rogerio who had now passed his twenty first birthday.

We do not find Rogerio listed again in the Sur account, but we do have a record concerning Rogerio in the following year of 1860. In the county recorders office is an old volume in which the coroner of Monterey County listed deaths that required a coroner's investigation. On November 29, 1860 there is an entry that Secundino Villa had died, aged 25, "pistol shot by Rogerio Cooper". No arrest was made, and reference was made to the coroner's report. Was the shooting an accident, or was it self defense?

A few other notes from the old account book are of interest in following the early development of the Sur rancho.

Travelers of today along the coast road cross over Juan Higuera Creek just south of the rancho lands, and north of Pfeiffer Big Sur Park. Juan Higuera began to work on the Sur rancho February 15, 1866 at \$200 per year and his account continues in this book until February of 1872, on two special pages.

The Sur account has only a few entries in 1869, 1870 and 1871. "1869 rented the Sud rancho for five years . . . paid for papers, leases and c in San Francisco \$18.50" "provisions for Juan Higuera \$67.00." In 1870 and 1871 the only charges seem to be for cutting and marking cattle, breaking colts (which cost of \$35.00 was paid to the Indian),



and for horseshoeing. In February of 1870 Cooper wrote that he had received from A. L. Rountree \$1,000.00 for cattle to be delivered in July.

We do not know to whom the rancho was rented in 1869, but we do know that the Cooper family was by then living in San Francisco where the children could meet the right people, and attend the many social events of the time.

Captain John B. R. Cooper died in San Francisco in 1872. Rogerio — or rather William Rogers as he was then called — died before his father's estate was probated in 1874. The Sur ranch went to the family — one half to the oldest son, John R. H. Cooper, and the other half to the other heirs — undivided shares.

A.E.

## HISTORICAL PROGRAMS PLANNED FOR 1972

As previously announced, a series of programs illuminating the splendid heritage of the Monterey area will be presented for the pleasure of the members of our organization, free of charge. Under the joint auspices of the Special Events and History Committees, four meetings are planned for this year. For the convenience of those who wish to attend, these meetings will take place alternately in the afternoons and evenings.

The first meeting will be held at the Casa Serrano on May 12th, at two-thirty. The subject will be "The Story of the Serranos and the Life-Style of Early Monterey." Miss Augusta Fink, Chairman of the History Committee and author of several books on California history, will present the historical material. Participating in the program as honored guests will be those persons responsible for the acquisition and preservation of the Casa Serrano.

Refreshments will be served, and it is hoped that old and new members will take this opportunity to visit with one another.

Ruth Fletcher, Special Events Chairman

## ADOBE TOUR

*Legends of Old Monterey* the theme for the annual adobe tour this April. Mrs. John Warren Doubles, Chairman and her committee have arranged to hold the tour on two days this year. The tour is always so popular, and yet there are more visitors who cannot attend on a Saturday due to other commitments. The tour this year will be Saturday, April 29th, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Tea, served at Casa Serrano, is included in the cost of the tickets — \$3.50 for adults and \$1.50 for servicemen. A luncheon will be served on Saturday and a brunch on Sunday in the Memory Garden of the Pacific Building at a small additional cost.

Fourteen of the adobes will have costumed hostesses, and historical tableaux will add color to the tour. Plan to take your guests that weekend on a tour through the history of old Monterey. You may ask for your tickets before the tour through our office, 550 Calle Principal, Monterey. Telephone (afternoons) 372-2608.

## COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

**GIFTS RECEIVED:** A child's clothing and undergarments from Mr. & Mrs. Milton W. Stitt; two Victorian chairs from Mr. Allen Church; a Kermin Shah rug from Mr. & Mrs. Austin Frey; a middle eastern rug from Col. & Mrs. Wm. Chapman; and from Mrs. Thomas B. Porter a Victorian bed and dresser, a Godey's lady book of 1865, and several other items that will furnish one room of Casa Serrano as a bedroom of the period.

**NEW DIRECTORS:** Mrs. John Gratiot and Mr. Bertram Heckenlaible were elected to the Board of Directors of the association. They replace Mrs. Fulton Freeman and Mr. Kirk Davidson, resigned.

**THE EDITORS  
MONTEREY HISTORY  
AND ART ASSOCIATION**

Post Office Box 805  
Monterey, California 93940

Return Requested

Non-Profit Organization  
Bulk Rate  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 88  
Monterey, California

**OFFICERS 1972-73**

President: Ted Durein  
First Vice President: Robert McKeever Jr.  
Second Vice President: Mrs. C. Tod Singleton  
Treasurer: Bertram Heckenlaible  
Secretary: Mrs. A. W. Elkinton

**EDITORS**

Mrs. A. W. Elkinton  
Mrs. Wm. O'Donnell

**OUR APOLOGIES TO ROBERT REESE**

The lead article — concerning Jedediah Strong Smith — in our December 1971 issue was written by Robert Reese, State Park Historian, District IV, Department of Parks and Recreation. Inadvertently his by-line was omitted.

**DIRECTORS:** Joseph Ansel, Mrs. Charles Bentley, Mrs. D. S. Berquist, Edwin Bliss, Col. Wm. M. Chapman, George Clemens, William Concolino, Jack Craft, Melvin Dick, Ted Durein, Mrs. A. W. Elkinton, Kenneth Ehrman, Mrs. George Fletcher, Mrs. John Gratiot, Stanley Greeb, Bertram Heckenlaible, Mrs. Robert Johnson, Mrs. Frank LaCauza, George Leutzinger, Gen. Harry N. Lyon, Robert McKeever, Robert McMahon, John Pattullo, Robert W. Reese, Robert Ross, Mrs. C. Tod Singleton, Hugh Steven, Adm. Earl E. Stone, Mrs. Duncan Todd, Mrs. VanCourt Warren.